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ABSTRACT

Drawing upon research findings on school effectiveness, the McREL School Improvement Program was designed to examine critically such factors as school leadership, building organization, school climate and environment, and how citizens and parents are encouraged to participate in raising morale and effectiveness. Focus is upon instructional practices, building level leadership and organization, and the relationship between curriculum and student assessment. A description is presented of the selection and training of management teams to work cooperatively with the schools, with emphasis on characteristics which have been identified as typical of effective schools. The procedures of workshops and inservice programs developed for school personnel are described. Worksheets used in the workshops are appended, as well as an article on research findings on the effective use of praise in the classroom. (JD)

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THE McREL SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

by Dr. Susan T. Everson

Our interest at McREL is primarily of research and development application of effective schools research findings. We became interested in the McREL School Improvement Program about three years ago. A group of six McREL staff members collected the material, screened it, and we worked to understand it ourselves. Then, we put it into a format useful to people in the field. In addition to collecting research reports, we invited researchers in to talk with us, and one of our group members visited programs across the country. After doing these things, we developed some requirements for a program. I want to share those with you before I talk about the specifics of the program.

We decided first and foremost that we would not compartmentalize the program.

We decided first and foremost that we would not compartmentalize the program. We had looked at programs across the country and found schools that were working this year on one area or another. Yet, the areas that were not being addressed were having an impact on the areas that were being addressed. So what we designed was very comprehensive. We said that we would work with schools who would work in all the areas we included in our design.

Second, we decided that we would work with groups of people. It could be a full faculty at a school. More often it was not, but it had to be a representative group of both faculty and administration. We do some work, however, with consortiums of administrators in such areas as leadership training.

We work regular school hours, having substitutes for those teachers who are participating.

We began working with some pilot districts two years ago. We learned immediately that working with teachers after school was not successful. So we work regular school hours, having substitutes for those teachers who are participating (sometimes on Saturdays if teachers said they would rather come in on Saturdays than miss a day with the students). We do this throughout the year with four formal work sessions scheduled about a month apart. Ideally, there is one session in late October, one in late November, one in January, and one in February. This gives people time to do what they have to do to begin making the changes that we ask of them.

Before we begin staff development, we develop the calendar and process in each district. This is critically important. We have looked at the research on clinical

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supervision and are strongly committed to some of the ideas that came from this work. One of the things that we found was that the actual formal training will differ district to district depending upon the makeup of the district. We have to work with the people, usually central office people, to develop the format. For example, I may spend extensive time with the Board. It is extremely important to work with the Board for their support.

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I found that the selection of team members can be critically important for the success of the program. It is best if the teachers participate in the selection. They know something about what they are getting into, and they are committed before they come to the first session. In one district, I went into each school and made a presentation. They were free to join the program or not. Interestingly, all schools chose to participate, and then teams were selected by the vote of the faculty in each school.

In some districts, usually in large districts, schools believed to be supportive of this type of work are selected to begin the program. Those schools will then act as models for other schools. One superintendent wanted to work with one full faculty instead of teams, and then have that faculty be available to other schools the following years. So we do all kinds of different things in terms of format. The most important thing for any district is to set up a plan that meets the specific needs of that district.

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And then we get into the training. There are four formal training days for the team. We added two formal training days for administrators. Those two days are set up for instructional leadership training. The principals who are comfortable at that sort of work are extremely good at helping those who are not. We often spread out those days into four half days. I feel that four one-half days is best, because there can be continuous assessment throughout the year. They can talk about what is happening with their schools and teachers and how their goals are changing as a result.

So there are six formal training days including the two for administrators. We have districts who want more than that, and we are willing to talk with them about that possibility. They may want training for parents, board members, or citizens, and we will build that into their plan. For our needs, however, we need four formal training days the first year. In addition, there are in-between sessions if they are needed, and we call those informal sessions. And certainly after the

four formal training days, there are informal site visits, which are followup sessions that are absolutely critical for communication. Those occur throughout the second year, by need, although there is nothing specific in the schedule. Normally, we try to build in local support agencies such as state education agencies and intermediate service agencies. That is basically the format.

The curriculum is very important . . . what you teach kids, and how you assess for that.

Now, the question is: What do we do? We developed a fairly simple framework to show what we were going to do at each training session (Appendix E, No. 1). Basically, we said that we are looking into three major areas that we believe contribute to school improvement goals, whatever the goals are. This is not an "add-on" program, an addition to whatever the schools are doing. Teachers are sometimes skeptical--understandably. We have been out there with mainstreaming, with career education, and all the extras. They have gone to the workshops, and it seems to be one more thing for them to do in the classroom. But, here we are simply looking at good classroom and school management that underlies all programs.

The first area is Teaching--all the things that go on in the classroom. Things like time management, classroom organization, learning styles, and teaching styles are included.

The second area, Curriculum/Assessment Relationship, is critically important. While the BTES work is important, it is what you do during those minutes that must be considered. Increasing engagement rate is only as good as what you teach the students during the increase. The curriculum is very important--how that is looked at, what you teach kids, and how you assess for that.

The leadership, the organization of the building, the climate, the environment, how one sets up citizen involvement, parent participation—all those are critical factors.

The third area is Building Level Leadership and Organization. We know that the very successful schools are those that have outstanding building level leadership. The leadership, the organization of the building, the climate, the environment, how one sets up citizen involvement, parent participation--all those are critical factors.

In each of these three areas we have designed materials to help schools look at themselves to see what they are doing right now. We know that we can come up with an engagement rate for teachers. We know how to help teachers observe for that, and we teach them to do that.

In the area of Curriculum/Assessment Relationship, we do preworkshop questionnaires with open-ended

questions about what they do in the areas of curriculum design and assessment systems. The other thing we do in the area of assessment is a content analysis of the tests they use.

It is our attempt to get people to look at themselves so they can see the areas where they need to improve.

In the area of Building Level Leadership we put together an instrument based on effective schools research. This is called the Academic Indicator Survey, now called the School Improvement Survey. It is our attempt to get people to look at themselves, so they can see the areas where they need to improve. This is a constructive, positive approach to improvement. They can see what their strengths are, build on those, and then go to the areas where they have not really addressed their need as well as they should have.

We devote most of one workshop to each area, although we cover all three areas during each session. For example, during the first workshop we spend most of our time on the area of teaching. We teach the participants how to do observations, and we talk about the research in the area of teaching. We basically give an overview of the other areas.

At the second workshop, we devote most of the time to curriculum assessment and barely look at teaching, although we do review that area and look at the data they gathered. We just begin to look at building level leadership during this workshop.

We teach the participants how to do observations, and we talk about the research in the area of teaching.

In the third session, we spend most of the time on building level leadership and organization. We do go back and review the things we talked about in the first two sessions. There are required assignments between sessions. The assumption is that each person will complete the tasks, so that we can review what we have done and then focus on the new session.

The fourth session is a planning session. We review everything we have covered. They have fairly important and sophisticated questions to ask which we try to cover. The rest of the session is devoted to the first step of developing their building level long-range improvement plan. We have had one year plans and five year plans. They vary, but each school team develops a plan.

Today, we will cover only briefly the sections on building level leadership and curriculum assessment alignment, which you will get in other sessions of this workshop. Most of our time will be spent in the teaching area.

We will look at the handout "Effective School Characteristics" (Appendix E, No. 2). This is a quick overview of those characteristics. For example, in 15,000 Hours teacher actions in lessons made a difference. In a workshop session, we talk about what those teacher actions would look like. We talk about it, we model it, and give the teachers ideas to take back to their classrooms. They come back and tell us whether the ideas worked or not. We have various strategies that are suggested for them to try.

These teachers are up and on their feet and there is teacher/child interaction all day long.

We talk about direct teaching and what works when they use direct teaching strategies. We find that this kind of information is often misused. For example, at a meeting I attended, Edmonds spoke about teacher expectation characteristics and the teacher's role. He said that what is needed is whole class instruction and direct instruction. You could see people writing that down. They would take that back to their schools and say, "O.K., we are going back to whole class instruction, direct teaching, no more fooling around in this classroom. If we only go back to the 50's, we will have no problems." I thought, "Oh, dear, here we go." So I asked that Edmonds define direct instruction and explain what the teacher would look like in that circumstance, so that we wouldn't have any misunderstanding. He said, "What I mean is that these teachers are up and on their feet and that there is teacher/child interaction all day long." In the training, we work in that area so we won't be misunderstood when we say "teacher actions."

What we found was a misuse of information, even on our part. We would give information, then go back into certain classrooms and what we would see wasn't what we expected. Now we are very cautious about that.

I suppose that when I go into schools and ask, "What are you here for?", I would hope to hear that taxpayers pay us to teach students. If they do not have that commitment, then they should not be there. Those schools that Edmonds and others talk about are obviously there to teach kids. That is apparent the minute you walk in the door. It is worth really focusing on the academics. The academic emphasis of the schools makes a difference in effective schools.

Another point, rewards rather than punishment, made a difference.

Another point, rewards rather than punishment, made a difference. According to research, punishment has a neutral effect unless physical punishment is used as the primary means to control the kids in school. If that is the case, it actually has a negative effect on achievement. What is found is that appropriate rewards

seem to have a positive effect on achievement. These rewards need to be shared publicly.

So as we go through these characteristics, we talk about examples, we have role play, and we have suggestions that educators can take back and try in their schools.

Every building that I have worked in the past year has chosen to work on expectations.

The other thing that we use with teams on Building Level Leadership and Organization is the Academic Indicator Survey. The survey is based on six areas from the research on effective schools. Each page of the survey is devoted to an area that is positively associated with achievement in schools.

The questions are worded to avoid answering good or bad. Instead, the survey asks: does this exist in your school to a great degree, does it exist at all, or does it have anything to do with your school? There are indicators that are critically important to the decision-making process for the people when they get the profile back. We work with the team to develop additional individual indicators for their district. These questions cover time allocations, student disruptions, student and faculty motivation, expectations (every building that I have worked in the past year has chosen to work on expectations), classroom organization, teacher professionalism, building support for teachers, a monitoring system, and parental interest in student learning.

If the norm-based test scores do not test what we are teaching, then those tests do not tell us much about our work in schools.

Most of the plan that is developed at the fourth session is based on the profiles that the teams get on their schools. To protect the privacy of those at the building who are responding to the survey, McREL completes the profile of the survey. An outside person who does not have a stake in the outcome could do this.

The second area is Curriculum/Assessment Relationship. Much of our work in this area is based on the work from the Southwest Regional Educational Laboratory. SWRL's materials, as well as some of the work from Los Angeles, seemed critically important to us and had to be a part of what we were doing. Also, we had gotten some information from Michigan State on the curriculum and testing relationship. If the norm-based test scores do not test what we are teaching, then those tests do not tell us much about our work in schools. McREL encourages the use of a comprehensive assessment system.

What we are talking about in curriculum and assessment is a process to describe those skills and that knowledge

which we expect all children to master and then assessing to see if mastery is attained. This does not have to occur at the same age. There are different learning styles and paces to consider, but we do expect students to master what we intend to teach.

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For example, if you have not looked at the Chicago Mastery Reading program, it would be worth the time to do so. One of the things the program does is to introduce a skill or concept to the class together, and then the follow-up activities associated with that skill or concept differ, depending on the need of the individual student. There are those who do not learn what we teach the first time. They need reinforcement, followup, and reteaching. Those children who understand the concept are ready for enrichment.

In the area of Curriculum/Assessment Relationship, we do a content analysis of the tests a district uses. We provide activities to the teams so that they can better match what they test to what they teach.

The third area in the McREL program is teaching. Today, the first thing we will consider is time use in the classroom (see Appendix E, No. 3). There will sometimes be a difference in time use between elementary and secondary schools. What period of time is devoted to instruction is the question we ask. We know from the Beginning Teacher Evaluation Study at Far West Laboratory that there is tremendous variation from class to class and school to school related to the time assigned to subject matter.

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After a school assesses for its percentage of time assigned for instruction, we must find out what portion of that time students are engaged in the tasks assigned.

At McREL, we have an observation sheet that we developed. Initially, each teacher selects nine students. Later that number can be increased. These nine students should include three high achievers, three middle achievers, and three low achievers.

Once a week, at the same time every week, the classrooms are observed. The teachers select the time about which they want information, the time that is most critical to the teachers.

The classroom observers do two things. First, they time those activities that are noninstructional. Those activities that are noninstructional are those activities in which the entire class is involved. If everyone is

interrupted, then that interruption is timed with a stop watch. Second, when instruction is occurring, the observers scan the nine students to see if each one is engaged in the assigned task. McREL staff collects those observation sheets and prepares a profile sheet for each teacher. Through this observation process teachers learn that various instructional strategies produce different engagement rates.

Basically, the staff of the school decided the morning is sacred--teachers will not be interrupted in the morning.

Once the engagement rate assessment is complete, teachers want to know what to do to increase engagement. For example, they want information: "What can I do about the student who has a high engagement rate and is achieving so poorly?" In the project, McREL presents strategies that can help teachers. We work with the teachers in various areas. For example, in high school, we talk about scheduling activities. They may set up teams of people who work with the same students. Together those teachers can revise students' schedules. One elementary school decided that announcements would be made at the same time every day unless there was a dire emergency, and assemblies were scheduled at the same time (in the late afternoon) throughout the year. Basically, the staff of the school decided the morning is sacred--teachers will not be interrupted in the morning.

Another topic we address is classroom organization. At the Laboratory, we sometimes divide organization information into five areas: Time, Organization and Structure, Students: Groups and Individuals, Curriculum-Content, and Curriculum-Process (see Appendix E, No. 4).

For today, I will spend more time introducing, discussing, and reviewing seatwork and less in the final seatwork activities.

Curriculum-Content means the materials the teacher uses, and Curriculum-Process means the instructional process--the interaction between the teacher and the students.

We start with the first area on your handout, "Time." "For today, I will spend more time introducing, discussing, and reviewing seatwork and less in the final seatwork activities." These sessions organize the classroom around their rules. Make sure the students know what the rules are, and they should know what the consequences are for breaking the rules. Don't wait until the kids break the rules before you tell them. They need to know beforehand.

"Today, I will attractively display students' work to demonstrate that I value their academic efforts." What we get here is: "I do that, but it is always the same kids." That is a problem, but I can share with you some

Even the lowest achieving student will work diligently to get something that he or she would be proud of to put on the board.

suggestions that have worked for me. You may put up a bulletin board and have a section for each student on that bulletin board. The children selected what they wanted on that bulletin board. They had to change it at least once a week, but they could change it as often as they liked. Be willing as a teacher to help them get their work in shape in order to get it up on the board. By letting them make the selection, you do not get in the situation of putting something on the board that the kids would be embarrassed about. Even the lowest achieving student will work diligently to get something that he or she would be proud of to put on the board. There are many techniques like that you can use. There should be something that every kid can display with pride.

"Today, I will face the class during small group lessons, so that I can observe and monitor all classroom activities." If the teacher sits in the right place for eye contact, that will make the difference. Even in the secondary situation, the positioning of yourself so you can observe the class, whether you are helping individuals or groups, is important. Turn your desk around so that when you are sitting at your desk (hopefully not often), you are observing the classroom. When teachers do that, they find that the engagement rate goes up.

"Today, I will regularly move around the room, visually scan the room, and keep continual track of what is going on." These teachers in the classroom are on their feet all day long. They are up working with kids, they know what is going on, they know where everybody is, they are busy and exhausted by 2:30. But that is the kind of teacher who seems to be organizing classrooms in this way. So, we suggest to people that they be up and busy and involved in the classroom all day long.

If you don't get something back in a week, you might as well not give it out.

"Today, I will give the students precise directions for assignment, including the time when the assignments are due, and when they will be corrected and returned." You can imagine the response. I also throw out here, "If you don't get something back in a week, you might as well not give it out." You need to get feedback from kids as soon as you possibly can. Some of the research that we've read in this area says that anything beyond a week the kids don't care about. The teachers wonder why, when they give it back, that it is wadded up and goes into the waste basket. The kids don't remember doing the assignment, they don't care if the teacher doesn't care enough to get it back sooner than that. There is a modeling effect here of valuing something, and that is critically important.

Not only should you organize the lessons for kids, and have their time scheduled so that they know when things are due, the teacher should model that. "You will get this in tomorrow, if you don't get it in, this is what will happen; there will be consequences." You assume that the kids will get the work in and they should, and you tell that you will get it back to them by Friday. It should include something other than smiley faces. They should have academic feedback.

If you use individualized projects, they should be teacher controlled and organized.

The same thing is true at the secondary level. We give kids an assignment and a month from now, two days before the project is due, we wonder why they have not started it. It is because they have not been given the sequence or the structure that they need to complete it. Very few students have that innate ability. We can teach them that, and they should become more independent in making those decisions. To assume that they will do it is a tragedy. So if you use individualized projects, they should be teacher controlled and organized.

"Today, I will check to see that the work materials relate to the lesson." Whether it is homework or seatwork, it should be directly related to what is being taught. Children should not be given new concepts to learn at home. Homework should be something that is comfortable for them, and it should be drill and practice. Concepts and learning occur at school with the help of the teacher.

Homework should be something that is comfortable for them, and it should be drill and practice.

Curriculum-Process..."Today, I will ask questions to be sure students are clear about information in the lesson." We use a lot of Madeline Hunter's work here.

Let me give you the titles of the other strategies which we work on. We work in the area of discipline. We do not advocate "quick-fix" discipline solutions. Certainly, we need short-time solutions to get started, but we focus on long-term behavioral changes, and how teachers can accomplish that. Unless you can make those changes for some students, they cannot get their engagement rates up.

During the project we also talk about expectations. There is an article on that subject called, "Your Praise Can Smother Learning" (see Appendix E, No. 5). I recommend this to you because it describes research on teacher expectations and the effect that praise has on success. What the writer argues is that we have overdone the "M & M's." Students are now expecting some reward for everything that they do. You ask them to do something, and they say, "Well,

what do I get for it?" What can teachers do about this? The McREL project tries to answer that question. We talk about diagnosis and prescription, assessment strategies in the areas of reading and mathematics, and error diagnosis by teachers.

We have overdone the "M & M's." Students are now expecting some reward for everything that they do.

The fourth area we will get into is what we call the "Change Process." This is a very important area. We use the research on school change to develop our program.

We have learned, for example, that people working in teams have been far more successful than those working alone. Participants need that kind of support. We work with teams from the same school building.

On the handout, "Staff Development Research," there is an overview of some of Bruce Joyce's work (Appendix E, No. 6). He has done a very nice job of telling us why what we have done for the last 15 years has not been implemented most of the time.

If you start by telling people something, the best you can expect in terms of implementation is about 5 percent. When you tell and you demonstrate, note that it jumps to 10-15 percent, but still not a very good percentage at all. This is not very cost effective to get only 10 percent implementation.

The next step you tell, you demonstrate, and you practice. We do a lot of this: we tell teachers, we demonstrate, they practice, and we talk about it. We thought this would really make a difference. Yet 20 percent implementation is about the best that will occur.

Coaching is a difficult role for the principal, because he/she also has an evaluative role, and the coach is more a supportive leader.

Yet if you tell, demonstrate, practice, and coach, 80-90 percent implementation occurs. When we talk about coaching, someone onsite needs to play that role of coach. "O.K., we've got a hurdle. It isn't exactly as it was described. Why do we have the hurdle? What can we do to get over it? Maybe we'll be even stronger as a result of it." And so that coaching effort exists onsite, in a clinical supervision model, where there is academic, nonevaluative feedback to people who are implementing the program. That kind of support must be built into the program. Coaching is a difficult role for the principal, because he/she also has an evaluative role, and the coach is more a supportive leader. Still, someone must provide this type of leadership if the principal cannot. A district must be willing to support this function in order to carry out the program; otherwise, it is simply a waste of money.

Finally, we have a magazine that we publish for teachers. It it called Noteworthy. McREL's third Noteworthy is available. This issue focuses on school improvement. Another school improvement issue will be available next winter. You may order Noteworthy for $3.00 per copy.

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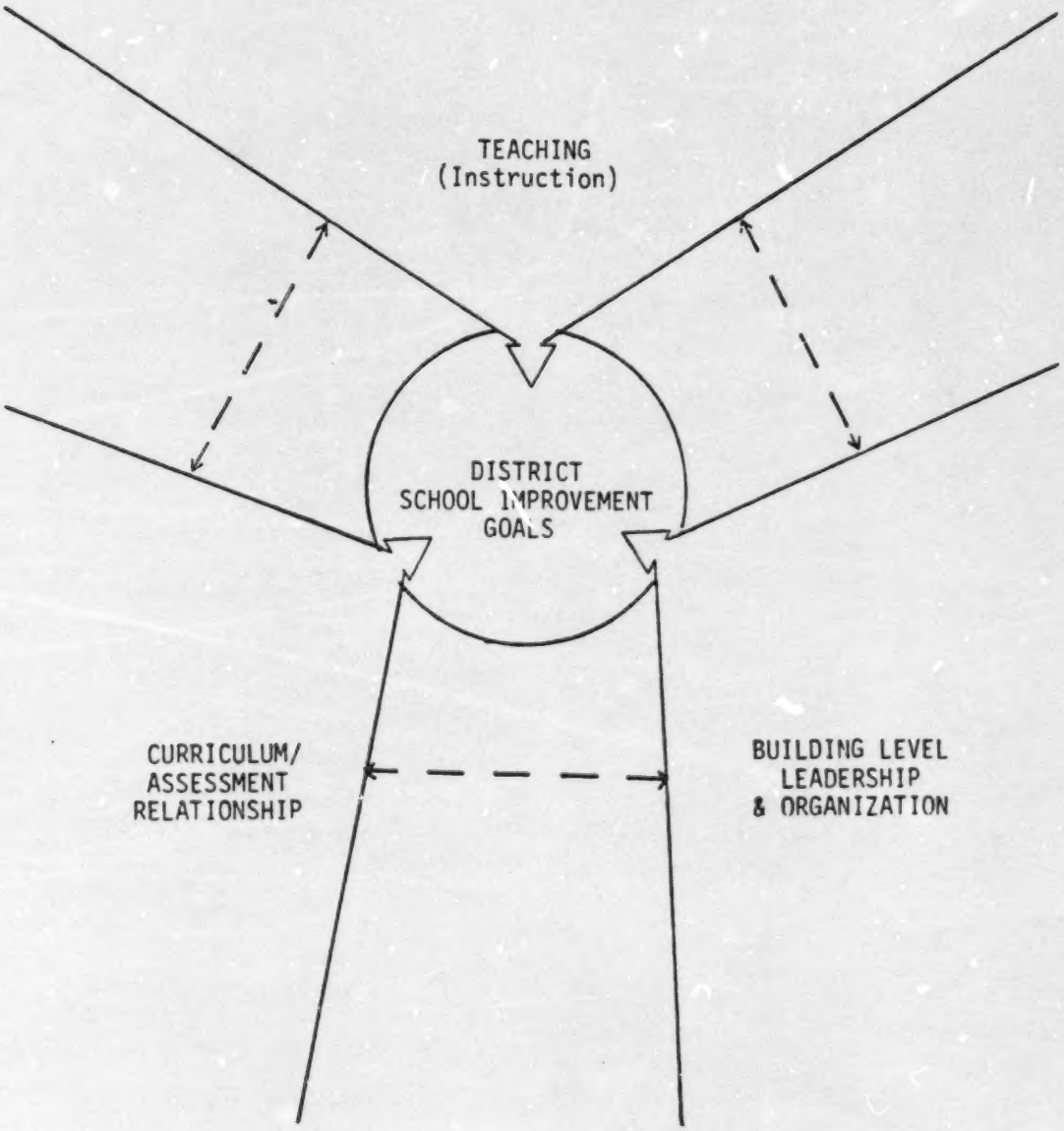
APPENDIX E:

Handouts to Presentation by Dr. Susan T. Everson

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

WORKSHOP FRAMEWORK



EFFECTIVE SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS

15,000 Hours, Rutter et al

1. Physical and administrative features of schools made very little difference.

2. The academic emphasis of the schools made a difference.

3. Teacher actions in lessons made a difference.

4. Rewards, rather than punishment, made a difference.

5. Pupil conditions made a difference.

6. Student responsibility and participation made a difference.

7. School organization factors made a difference.

Effective Schools Study, Edmonds et al

1. Building Leadership.

2. Common Goals.

3. School Climate.

4. Implied Teacher Expectations.

5. Monitoring System.

WORKSHEET FOR ACADEMIC EFFICIENCY

I. TOTAL TIME AVAILABLE IN SCHOOL DAY (min.): _____

II. TIME LOST TO BUILDING-CONTROLLED FACTORS: A+B+C+D+E+F =

A. Time lost to lunch period (min.) _____

B. Time lost to announcements/homeroom (min.) _____

C. Time lost between classes (min.) _____

D. Time lost to free period (min.) _____

E. Time lost to recess (min.) _____

F. Other time lost out of class (min.) _____

III. TIME AVAILABLE TO TEACHERS FOR INSTRUCTION

I - II = _____

SUMMARY OF IDEAS

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP KIDS ACHIEVE

TIME

Spend more time introducing, discussing and reviewing seatwork and less in the final seatwork.

Plan and carry out specific steps to end one lesson and begin another in order to increase learning time and decrease transition time.

Spend more time with students on reading and math, and less on clerical matters and unplanned events (e.g., pencil sharpening, passing papers, taking attendance, grading homework).

ORGANIZATION AND STRUCTURE

Review with students the three main classroom rules.

Attractively display students' work to demonstrate that I value their academic efforts.

Face the class during small group lessons so that I can observe and monitor all classroom activities.

Regularly move around the room, visually scan the room, and keep continual tract of what is going on.

Give the students precise directions for assignments, including the time when the assignments are due, and when they will be corrected and returned.

STUDENTS: GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS

Spend more time on whole class or group instruction and less on working alone with individual students for extended periods.

Plan and prepare structured materials so that students can work by themselves on specific academic tasks.

CURRICULUM - CONTENT

Teach a math concept using manipulative materials, e.g., cuisinaire rods.

Teach three new words emphasizing word meanings, by using drill and practice, and illustrations.

Check the seatwork materials to be sure that they relate to the lesson.

CURRICULUM - PROCESS

Ask questions to be sure students are clear about information in the lesson.

Direct my questions to children who do not often participate.

Determine if students need skills in following instruction, and will not automatically assume they know how.

Provide immediate response to the accuracy of a student's answers, guiding the student to the correct answer.

YOUR PRAISE CAN SMOTHER LEARNING

by David L. Martin

In classrooms throughout the country, teachers are popping jellybeans into students' mouths for any conceivable reason: to reward correct answers, to encourage more answers, in response to incorrect answers, to reward the motivated students, to motivate the unmotivated; and perhaps most often, jellybeans are given on a random basis, out of habit, for no special reason at all. Tons of jellybeans are being dispensed and consumed. Having discovered this widespread use of candy in the classroom, a few researchers are asking pointed questions: Does the candy aid or disrupt learning? What effects does it have on children and what they learn, how they learn, and their attitudes about learning? Should it be used at all?

Farfetched, yes. But if you substitute praise for candy, this scenario is an accurate one, including the part about researchers who currently are studying praise as it's used by teachers. And what the researchers say they are finding is startling. Praise is used in massive amounts; praise is ineffective in helping children learn and can actually sabotage learning; praise can hook kids on external rewards and can weaken their self-motivation; praise is used to control low-achieving students; praise perpetuates unequal treatment based on race and ethnic background.

Praise? Are the researchers talking about common, everyday, run-of-the-classroom praise? "That's a good answer." "You did really well." "Good, good." "Oh, that's excellent." That type of praise?

Yes.

How One Researcher Found Praise

In the 1960s, University of Florida professor Mary Budd Rowe tried to find out what variable could make children in elementary grade science programs develop the type of scientific inquiry into ideas and relationships that the courses were designed to provoke. A lot of things didn't seem to make a difference: science background of the teacher, type of science curriculum being used, size of class, age of child. What Rowe finally discovered to be the most effective variable in eliciting inquiry from students is something she calls "wait-time," which is the amount of time a teacher waits for an answer after posing a question (wait-time I) and the amount of time a teacher waits after student answers a question (wait-time II). Rowe found that when teachers stretched out their wait-times to an average of three seconds (instead of the overwhelmingly typical wait-times of one second or less), several things happened: students gave longer response and more unsolicited but appropriate responses; students' confidence in their responses increased; students' failure to respond decreased; students interacted and exchanged more information with each other; and students asked more questions. In other words, student performance improved, or at least there was an increase in the types of student actions that we often associate with improved performance.

But there was a wasp in the wait-time ointment: praise. While examining the different patterns of wait-times given to students in a class, Rowe found that teachers praise certain students more than others. She then went back to her

data to see how and how much teachers praise. Rowe discovered that praise is "habituated" in the speech of many teachers, one out of every four words uttered in a classroom is a word of praise. Rowe also found that teachers' heavy praise of students sabotaged the beneficial effects of longer wait-times. "Thus," Rowe explained in a 1974 issue of the Journal of Research in Science Teaching, "we were forced to pay attention to rewards whether we wished to or not, since they frequently confounded the interpretation of the experiments, observations and those recordings are contained in reports she's written for the Journal of Research in Science Teaching and in her McGraw-Hill book, Teaching Science As Continuous Inquiry. What Rowe has uncovered is a stunning indictment of praise: it cuts into students' task persistence; it undermines students' confidence in their answers; it lowers the number of alternative explanations offered by students; and it cuts down on cooperation and exchanges among students.

How Praise Gets in Learning's Way

One of Rowe's primary contentions is that heavy praise from teachers makes children more dependent on a system of extrinsic, rather than intrinsic, rewards. Constant praise "teaches" a child that reward will come from one external source (the teacher), and this interferes with a child's development of self-satisfaction from learning itself--from understanding new ideas of completing new tasks.

Rowe's speculation seems to be borne out in her experimental findings and in the work of other researchers, such as Martin L. Maehr and William M. Stallings of the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. In a 1972 report published in Child Development, Maehr and Stallings said that their studies of eighth graders indicated that conditions in which students relied on internal evaluations (doing a task because it is fun or interesting to the student, for example) "seemed to spawn greater motivation to (continue) performance at difficult tasks." Students preferred to do easy tasks when they knew that their work was going to be evaluated by an external source (the teacher).

Heavily praised students have less confidence in their answers. Rowe maintains she found that students from high-praise classrooms (when compared with students in low-praise classrooms) did more of the following three actions, which Rowe infers are signs of students' lowered confidence: eye-checking with teachers, which Rowe says is done by students who are unsure of themselves and who are trying to confirm that what they are doing or saying is OK with the teacher; making responses in an inflected, self-doubting tone; and exhibiting low task persistence, which indicates to Rowe that students are unwilling to keep plugging at something in which they have little confidence.

In one of her experiments, second graders from inner-city schools were tested on how confident they would be in continuing to give explanations when Rowe's experimenters disagree with those explanations. The experimenters wanted to see how many students involved in the experiment precludes one from making generalizations. Rowe did find that most of the students from classrooms with a heavy praise schedule failed to survive two disagreements: five out of the ten students tested quit after the first disagreement. Most of the students from classrooms with a low schedule of praise survived all three disagreements.

Rowe suggests that students accustomed to high amounts of praise will not get involved in innovative or complex reasoning because they've been conditioned to go for a "quick payoff" of praise. When the primary reward system in a classroom is teacher praise (instead of the rewards of discovery, internal satisfaction, or even praise from peers), students also are less likely to share information with or to listen to other students. In one set of high-praise classrooms, Rowe found that students tended to guard results until the teacher asked for them. This behavior was especially pronounced in middle-class populations.

In a study of 30 classrooms, Rowe compared the students of the five teachers who praised the most with the students of the five teachers who praised the least. Here's what she discovered:

> The low reward schedule produced more student-student encounters. Task persistence is higher under the low schedule. Under the high schedule, the students tend to step at stages and call for the teacher. Thus, there is also a lot of waiting around for the teacher to reach them. The amount of spontaneous sharing of ideas between students is greater in the low reward condition. The number of alternative explanations and suggestions for new experiments favored the low reward group. Inflected responding was almost three times as frequent in the high reward group as in the low. . .

In some high-praise classrooms, Rowe found, students would "tease or mock" kids who had been praised; "This behavior was common in both suburban and ghetto groups but was especially pronounced in some ghetto classes." This negative peer pressure also was evident in a study done by Georgia M. Gabor, curriculum advisor for the San Marino School System in Pasadena, California. Gabor conducted two experiments with junior high school math classes; one experiment was with students from an "underprivileged, minority community, inner-city" school, and the other study was with students from a middle-class suburban school. Using the students' performance on a math test as her basis, Gabor sought to examine the effect of several variables, including two teaching methods, praise, reproof and no feedback. Before taking the math test, some students were praised for their performance on a previous test, some students were criticized for their past performance and some received no feedback. Gabor hypothesized that children who were praised would perform better than children who received no feedback from the teacher or who were criticized. She struck out on teaching methods and "no feedback"--those variables didn't seem to have a significant effect on performance. But, she wrote in a 1975 issue of the California Journal of Educational Research, "the effect of reproof and praise were highly significant in the studies." Gabor said that "reproof had a significantly facilitating effect" on the suburban students and that praise affected "performance of both sets of students very negatively."

Some of the suburban students in Gabor's experiment said that the praise made them over-confident and that they didn't concentrate on the test. And, as in Rowe's observations, some inner-city students "felt annoyed to irate about having had been praised in front of their peers."

Whom Praise Hurts Most

In her testing samples, Rowe discovered that teachers praised students whom they rated as their "top five" differently than they praised students whom they rated as their "bottom five." The bottom five students, according to Rowe, were praised more and received more nonpertinent praise; teachers praised their top students for correct answers but they praised their bottom students for both correct and incorrect answers. For the students classified (by teachers) as much as 50 percent of the praise did not seem to be attached to correct responding. The bottom five generally receive(d) an ambiguous signal system.

This nonpertinent praise, according to another study, is the most disruptive type of praise. In a 1970 issue of the Journal of Research in Science Teaching, Francis X. Lawlor of Columbia University's Teachers College in New York described how he tested 191 second grade students (from a middle class, suburban school) on their ability to perform a simple sorting and grouping task. The children were split into groups that performed the task under different reward conditions: pertinent reward (praise for acceptable solutions), no reward (the experimenters quietly observed the children), and nonpertinent reward (children were praised on a "fixed time schedule"). Lawlor said that the nonpertinent reward condition "is most analogous to observed classroom practice." He looked at the second graders' performance in several areas (number of solutions, number of acceptable solutions, perseverance time, (for example) and this is what he found:

> The conclusion seems justified, on the basis of the data reported in this study, that the use of verbal rewards which are not congruent with behavior will result in less efficient problem-solving than either a neutral, no-reward situation, or the use of rewards which are congruent with the problem-solving behavior. The giving of rewards which are congruent improves the problem-solving efficiency of girls but not of boys.

It would seem that Lawlor's finding that pertinent reward can be helpful is in conflict with Rowe's conclusions, but she told Learning that it is not. Rowe has been studying more complex learning activities (inquiry into and exploration of ideas, for example), and the effect praise has on this type of learning is vastly different from the effect praise has on the type of simple task that Lawlor's subjects were performing (he said the tasks "were of low conceptual complexity").

Some studies, Lawlor's included, seem to indicate that praise has a different effect on girls than it does on boys. Girls may be more tuned into or susceptible to praise, but this has not been proved, and Rowe says she is cautious about concluding that praise has a sexist effect.

Researchers from Stanford University's School of Education are not, however, at all cautious about concluding that praise has a special--and negative--effect on minority-member students. Celestino Fernandez, Ruben W. Espinosa and Sanford M. Dornbusch questioned 770 San Francisco high school students about the students' attitudes toward school and opinions of their achievement in school. The researchers wanted to know what was perpetuating "the low academic status" of Chicano students. One of the leading culprits apparently is praise.

Chicano and black students responding to the questionnaire said they did think school was important, they did think they were working hard in school, and they did think they were doing O.K. in school. But these minority-member students were neither working hard nor doing well in school when compared with other students. Fernandez, Espinosa and Dornbusch said that the minority students' misperceptions were a product of a faulty evaluation system, which substituted teacher warmth and praise for challenging academic standards.

Excerpts from the Stanford report:

- Chicano and black students were the two groups with the lowest achievement levels, yet they were receiving the most academic praise.
- Teachers' failure to set challenging standards led Chicano students to a false view of their own level of effort and skill. Their faulty self-assessment helped perpetuate a pattern of institutional discrimination. The warm and positive acts of teachers led to the preservation of the existing structure of inequality.
- Chicanos and blacks, the ethnic groups who were doing less well in school, saw teachers as more friendly and warm than did the other ethnic groups. Most teachers are "Anglos," yet other white students (and Asian students) perceived teachers as less friendly and warm.
- Upon reflection, it is not surprising that receiving praise for work that is not very creditable leads to distorted images of the level of effort and achievement each student believes he or she is putting forth.

In their conclusion, the Stanford researchers say they are not blaming teachers (who are trying to be responsive to students) but that they are revealing "institutional discrimination in which the agents of discrimination, the teachers, are warm and positive in their relations with their students, and the students are deceived about their current position and their destiny."

How Not To Praise

All these findings about praise are, to say the least, unsettling. And they're confusing, too. In our minds we may link praising students with helping and being supportive of them. There also seems to be a conflict between what behavior modification studies conclude about the effectiveness of positive reinforcement (praise) and what the research cited in this article says about praise. But no conflict, in fact, exists. Rowe's work concentrates on praise's effect on inquiry, exploration of new ideas, investigation into relationships. She points out that praise for simpler tasks or for drills (multiplication tables, for example) or for acceptable social behavior is or can be effective. (The Lawlor study indicates that even for simpler tasks, praise must be pertinent.) The decision to praise or not to praise, therefore, probably should be based on the type of learning students are engaged in: if it's

simple or rote learning, praise (or jellybeans, for that matter) probably will work. For more in-depth learning, neither praise nor candy is likely to be effective.

Here are some ways to determine if you praise heavily, and if you do, how to stop.

1. Make tape recordings of your exchanges with students. While listening to these tapes, count the number of verbal rewards you hand out. Do words like "good" and "excellent" and "fine" constantly pop up in your speech? Do you seem to be giving more praise to low-achieving students? Is the praise you give low-achieving students less pertinent or accurate than the praise you give high-achieving students? Watch your students for other actions which may indicate that you (rather than the students or learning itself) have become the sole and central source of reward in your classroom: students do not share information with each other, they answer you in a questioning tone, give short and incomplete answers, watch you constantly, and seem extremely eager (jumping up and down, frantically waving their arms) to get <u>your</u> attention and to give answers to <u>you</u>.

2. If praise does seem to be a main ingredient in your classroom, try to slow down your pace. Be silent more often. Give kids a chance to answer questions and a chance to follow up on their answers. (Rowe has found that most teachers give wait-times of one second or less.) Heavy praise simply may be an unconscious part of your speech. You might, for example, say "good, good" after a student's answer in much the same way each of us says "uh, uh" when we pause during our conversations. One way to break this praise-speech habit (and to lengthen wait-times as well) is simply to be silent after you ask a question and after a student answers your question. Effective wait-times begin at three seconds.

3. Do not always be the one who sets goals and tasks for students; encourage them to set their own goals and to determine their own tasks: Encourage them to set goals for themselves that are not easily reached. Some studies have shown that students who work toward their own specific difficult goals accomplish more and build more self-motivation than do students who work toward goals that have been set by an external source and that are rather easy to meet. The Stanford research study notes that praise or teacher friendliness alone is not effective in helping children maximize their efforts; challenging standards must be set.

Maryann Gatheral, supervisor of teacher education at the University of California at Davis, sees heavy praise as a symptom of poor teaching techniques. Gatheral says that an effective teacher can convey a positive attitude without using words of praise (which she calls "flattery"). Gatheral also speculates that teachers who criticize heavily need praise as a counter-balance, and if the criticism stops, so will the praise. Rowe would argue that both types of external evaluations (praise and criticism) get in learning's way.

Here is some of Gatheral's advice for teaching without flattery:

- In response to a student's answer or comments, be specific and put the focus on the material being covered or on other students--or

just look at the student and wait for him to elaborate or for other students to chime in. Ask another question. Ask about the topic being discussed. Ask, "How does that relate to what we're talking about?" Ask another student, "What do you think of this answer?" These questions won't come across as put-downs, Gatheral says, if the teacher's tone and attitude is supportive.

- If a student gives a correct answer and you feel compelled to praise (maybe the answer was especially insightful or perhaps this specific student usually doesn't answer correctly or at all), make these kinds of comments: "That's getting us someplace." Or: "That gives some depth to our conversation." Gatheral says, however, that in a classroom with a positive tone, and in which students know it is safe to respond, the teacher probably won't "feel compelled" to praise.

- If a student makes a response that is completely off the track, a teacher can say, "I don't understand what you're getting at." Or: "What facts do you have to back that up?" (Again, the teacher's supportive attitude is the key to making these types of questions non-threatening to students.) The teacher can pick up on specific parts of the student's remark:

  Teacher: "You say witches are bad. Why?"

  Student: "Because they're ugly."

  Teacher: "Is ugliness bad? Can you be ugly and good? Does anyone know of a person who is ugly and good?"

Gatheral says that this type of response to a "wrong" answer teaches a child that he must have reasons to support his opinions. When children can't support their contentions, the incorrectness becomes obvious to them--the judgment does not have to come from the teacher.

- Praise should not be used to encourage reluctant students to participate in classroom discussions, says Gatheral. Instead, she suggests, a teacher, in circulating around the classroom, should talk casually and privately with the reluctant student. Get him accustomed to talking, to making comments, to sharing his opinions. Choose topics (in your private conversations with the reluctant student and in classroom conversations) that interest him. Keep getting to him in this private, casual, non-threatening way, Gatheral says, and don't attempt to praise him into responding.

No one is suggesting that you never, ever again utter a word of praise during classroom exchanges with your students. But you and your students will be better off if you do not praise heavily, inaccurately or habitually. And it does seem that some types of praising are more disruptive than others. Gatheral argues that praise may not be so harmful if it is based on specific, clear and well-understood standards. If you praise a student for not being noisy, say: "You're doing a good job of being quiet and that'll help us finish our discussion." Do not say: "You're being a good student."

Mary Budd Rowe makes a similar point: Praise of tasks, when it is specific and detailed, is not as disruptive as generalized praise of persons. If you tell a student, "That's good that you've set up this experiment in a new way," then other students know what is being praised and can even attempt to duplicate the praised task. Non-praised students have less of an idea what is praiseworthy and can become resentful when teachers praise persons ("You're a good experimenter.") or when teachers use praise in other unclear and nonspecific ways: "Good. Good." Or: "That's an excellent job!" (Does everyone know what is being praised and why it's excellent?)

If you manage to stop praising students and then find that the urge to praise is building up inside you and that you absolutely must relieve the pressure by praising someone, lay it on your colleagues. Overt, heavy, person-oriented praise has not yet been found to have deleterious effects on teachers.

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TRAINING EFFECTIVENESS: THE DEGREE OF PROFICIENCY ATTAINED IN KNOWLEDGE, SKILL AND APPLICATION DETERMINED BY THE FIVE STEPS OF THE TRAINING DESIGN

PERCENT OF IMPLEMENTATION	TRAINING STEPS	THE TRAINING STAGES		
		Knowledge Mastery	Skill Acquisition	Classroom Application
5-10%	THEORY	Middle to high	low	very low
10-15%	Theory Plus DEMONSTRATIONS	high	low to middle	very low
20+%	Theory, demonstrations, plus PRACTICE and FEEDBACK	high	high	very low
	Theory, demonstration, practice, feedback, CURRICULUM ADAPTATION	high	high	low to middle
80-90%	Theory, demonstration, practice, feedback, curriculum adaptation, plus COACHING	high	high	high
	All of the above with PERIODIC REVIEW	high	high	high

Note: the degree of proficiency attained as indicated by LOW, MIDDLE, or HIGH

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